



A woman prepares tortillas to sell on the street in Mexico City.



A man removes the leaves from a corn for sale at the La Merced market.

'Still alive?'
 Crowds of tourists stopped to watch-some exclaiming "This is Mexico!"-as the rhythm of the huehuetl, a traditional drum, mixed with the aromas of incense and corn from street food. "Suddenly they see us and say 'oh, wow, are they still alive? How weird!'" veteran dancer and tour guide Tezcatlipoca, who only gave one name, said wryly. "Seeing it as a show is good because this has not died," the 70-year-old added. Dance and purification ritu-

als on the site of the ancient Aztec capital resonate deeply for those seeking to safeguard the traditions for future generations. "It's one of the places with the most cosmic energy, but it must be cleaned because it has also seen a lot of blood," said Octocayohua. He views the conquest by the Spanish, with its battles and massacres, as a "humiliation." Dance, based on the movements of the moon and the sun, is the most visual manifestation of a thriving spiritual and philosophical move-

ment that aspires to restore the splendor of the Aztec legacy. "Dance is a way to understand their values and view of the cosmos," said Ocelocoatl Ramirez, whose foundation Zemanauak Tlamachtliyan seeks to preserve the indigenous culture. "The purpose is to share it with people, to do something in communion," added Ramirez, who for decades has instructed enthusiasts who dance amid the aroma of medicinal plants.



Grasshoppers are seen at a store of the San Juan market.



People perform an Aztec dance at the historical Center in Mexico City.



A man shells a corn at the La Merced market.